



USING FASHION AS A TOOL TO STAND OUT AMONG PEERS

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ABSTRACT

Fashion plays a major role in our society. Stand in any line waiting to check out and the covers of magazines exude fashion. Designers have movie stars wearing what they decide the season should call for. Every movie or television program has carefully chosen what look they want to portray. Without even realizing it, we come to expect flawlessness as much from models and celebrities as from ourselves. Every ad may not be about fashion, but the clothes are a subliminal way of catching what audience they are geared to. Fashion reaches every corner that you turn. This study analyses the extent to which fashion is used as a tool to stand out among peers at every walk of life.

KEY WORDS: Beauty ideal, Fashion trends, Peer influence.

INTRODUCTION

"Fashion is the most powerful art there is. It's movement, design, and architecture all in one. It shows the world who we are and who we'd like to be. Just like your scarf suggests that you'd like to sell used cars." - Blair Waldorf

Fashion itself is a reflection of social, economic, political and cultural changes. It expresses modernity, symbolising the spirit of the times. It is said to affect the social aspects of life. According to Luciana Zegheanu, fashion causes changes in social, economic and political landscapes. Thus, fashion benefits and stimulates society, and in the process promotes creativity.

Through fashion, people communicate and express themselves. Fashionable individuals' personal style is often described as "unique" or "inimitable." If consumers use fashion to express themselves as distinctive individuals, then it is valuable to have available a large range of different identifiers. Fashion goods provide a vocabulary. What consumers might value in fashion then is the availability of a variety of goods to choose from, a proliferation of the number of meanings that can be made. The availability of a variety of different goods enlarges the vocabulary and the meanings that can be communicated. If consumers have a taste for differentiation of identity through fashion, then individual differentiation becomes an identifiable desired feature, for the purpose of intellectual property regulation of fashion. We posit that "differentiation" is a key feature of the consumption and production of fashion. But fashion would not be fashion were it not for its basically collective character. Even as individuals strive to differentiate themselves through fashion choices, fashion is a means of participating in group movement. We call this "flocking." Consumers tend to engage in flocking in buying new clothes, not because they need them, but because their existing clothes seem outdated. They want to be "in fashion." Flocking among consumers is again not necessarily a function of imitation or copying of any particular groups or individuals, though it may be. It can be a manifestation of a desire to partake of the collective moment, to be in step with society, or to be in touch with the present. It may be pleasurable for people to move in a collective direction, joined by others in expressive endeavour. There may be pleasure in a convergence, in participation in similar themes and ideas that reflect the times that all are experiencing.

We are naturally aspirational creatures, and can't help chasing after perfection. Nearly every person on the planet wishes they had perfect skin or the perfect body.

Effectively, you are not the one who decides how to be beautiful, the culture around you does, through the movies, fashion advertisements and editorials it produces. Ideals change with the trends. One small spark can set off a forest fire, and all it takes is one small seed of an idea to be planted to change how everyone sees the world. Though most women today realize that the images in advertisements are not completely realistic, many don't realize the extent to which these unrealistic representations of beauty are imprinting themselves on their interpretation of physical perfection. That's where all the danger lies. Without even realizing it, we come to expect flawlessness as much from models and celebrities as from ourselves.

Fashion moves money which helps the economy. Fashion separates the classes of society also. There are endless restaurants, social events, and churches where fashion plays a large role. All in all, almost every country has their own fashions that make a statement of a person's wealth and the statement they are making using style or lack of style.

Fashion is all based on trend, it's all about what everyone else is wearing. However the only way to break the trend is to do something better, then everyone would be following your trend until the next person comes along. Wear what you like and what makes you, well you. It doesn't matter whether everyone does or doesn't want to follow you, what matters is that you enjoy yourself.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand fashion from a common man's perspective.
- To realize the effect of fashion on the current generation.
- To comprehend the scenario wherein people try to fit in, in terms of fashion.

METHODOLOGY

This study deals with the effect of fashion images on the general public and how it influences them. The various methods of procedure that are to be followed are explained in detail.

Selection and description of the tool

Data can be obtained either through experiment or survey. The basic instrument used in this research is the survey, a set of questions presented to the subject.

Questionnaire method was selected for collecting data. The questionnaire method is an instrument of data collection. According to G.W.Allport, "the questionnaire was designed to collect data from large and widely scattered groups of people". The questionnaire is used in gathering objective and quantitative data as well as data of qualitative nature.

The questionnaire comprises of the following questions: name, age, sex, designation, importance of fashion, ideas about fashion, receiving compliments with regard to one's sense of fashion, fashion trends, purchasing behaviour, opinion on fashion shows, confidence in terms of fashion sense etc.,

The types of questions used in the questionnaire are multiple choice and close ended questions. Close ended questions had 'Yes' or 'No' responses.

Selection of the sample

In this study, random sampling method was followed to select the sample. Random sampling means any method of selection that guarantees that all possible samples are equally likely to be drawn states Althoen (1994). Random sampling methods are those in which every item in the universe has a known chance or probability of being chosen for the sampling (gupta, 1991).

Data collection

The data for the investigation was collected from various streams of profession, students and home makers totalling upto 100. They were given a link to the survey questionnaire that was created online.

Consolidation, tabulation, analysis and interpretation of the data

According to Sindu (1990) data means studying the tabulated material in order to determine the inherent facts of meanings. It involves breaking down of existing complex factors into simpler parts and putting the parts together in new arrangements for the purpose of interpretation.

Interpretation is an aspect of research operation which is geared to exposing our conclusion by linking them to other available knowledge or established theories says Wilkinson and Bhandarker (1992). Singh (1983) states that after the data is collected it is essential to put the unorganized information in a systematic manner in order to obtain the desired results and scientific interpretation. The data collected can be consolidated and represented in figures to be arranged in tables for the next stage.

According to Rath (1991) analysis of data depends on classifying, ordering quantifying and interpreting the verbal and other processed symbolic products of individuals and groups of people. Kothari (1993) opines that after the data have been collected, the same should be properly edited and then organised in the form of tables or charts or groups. This would help the researcher in finding out the salient features of the data.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis used in the present investigation are as follows:

1. Mean
2. Percentage
3. Chi square
4. Standard Deviation

Hypothesis

A null hypothesis was formulated to investigate the above study.

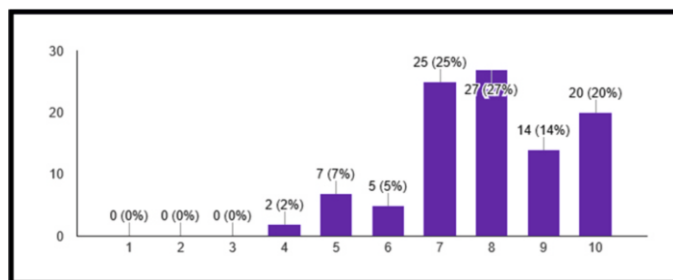
RESULTS & DISCUSSION**1. IMPORTANCE OF FASHION**

Figure I

Figure I indicates that majority of the respondents have marked level 8 as their level of importance with regard to fashion. 2% have marked 4, 7% have marked 5, 5% marked 6, 25% marked 7, 14% marked 8 and 20% marked the highest level i.e., 10

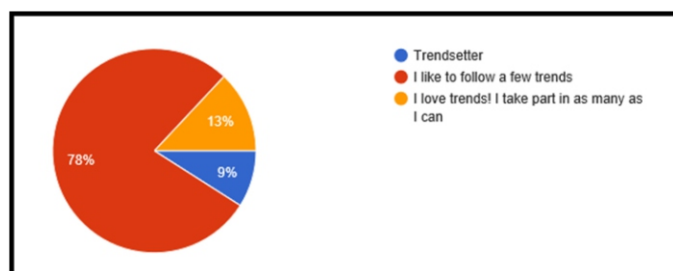
2. REACTION TO TRENDS

Figure II

3. DRESS UP TO BE UNIQUE OR FIT IN

Table I

S.NO	RESPONSE	NO. OF RESPONDENTS
1.	Unique	61.5%
2.	Unique while still blending in	0
3.	Blend in	38.5%

Table I indicates that 61.5% like being different and stick out from everyone else whereas 38.5% were keen on blending in and fitting with everyone else.

CONCLUSION

From the study, it can be concluded that a person uses fashion to boost his/her self confidence and self esteem. Fashion images have set certain standards in styles and trends which are to be followed. Majority of the people follow these trends without any question as they do not wish to be outdated in terms of fashion. It helps them to be more confident among their peers. Therefore, fashion images have a great impact on the general public as it helps them to identify themselves as a whole as well as in establishing themselves as distinctive individuals in competitive environments where appearance of a person plays a major role.

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